

## Tribe Building

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### ABSTRACT

*As Sir Rupert Smith emphasizes we are facing a paradigm change. Most of current conflicts are fought “amongst population”, war as an armed struggle between Nation-States is fading. Thus the ability to understand the human terrain becomes a key factor towards stabilization of a given country. How to take into account this critical change in a defence transformation endeavour ? Our paper will stress the need to develop new tools in order to implement human sciences teachings in the defence field (conflict's analysis and forces format). We contend that a relevant human sciences concept must be formalized enough to enable Modelling & Simulation (M&S) efforts and intelligence data organisation. This modelling analysis foster the knowledge of insurgent's behaviour and can be implemented to help “rational decision making” at all levels.*

*In this paper we will argue that a classical human science concept, the traditional to modern transition, may be formalized enough to deliver an operational concept, relevant for Coin's stakeholders on the field : tribe building. It is noteworthy that we are not only intervening in failed states contexts but also in “detritalize” areas, “eroded by conflict or population displacement”. In this case, our article states the need to repair tribal structures first. It is an interesting paradox that restoring the traditional fabric of society is the best way to achieve peaceful transitions toward democracy.*

*In conclusion, this article proposes to carry state & nation building activities coherently with tribe building activities.*

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>As a result of the current trend for wars fought “amongst the population”<sup>2</sup>, the professional study of population during war is growing<sup>34</sup>: human science disciplines such as economics, sociology, political sciences, anthropology and religious studies are becoming increasingly relevant. An important example is the Human Terrain System (HTS), a deployment of 150 anthropologists in Afghanistan and Iraq designed to help field commanders with intelligence collection. Another example is the Counter-Insurgency (COIN) field manual FM 3-24, partly written by McFate, a professional anthropologist<sup>5</sup>, and the Stability field manual FM 3-07 and UK JDP 3-40 inspired by political science works such as Fukuyama's.

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<sup>1</sup> The views and opinions expressed in this article are strictly those of the authors.

<sup>2</sup> “The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World”, Rupert Smith, Penguin Books.

<sup>3</sup> “Knowing the Enemy, Can social scientists redefine the “war on terror”?”, George Paker, The New Yorker, December 18, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, leading voices in COIN leverage a strong background in HS: for instance, Kilcullen has a PhD in anthropology and Petraeus, a PhD in Political Sciences.

<sup>5</sup> An initial draft of the current FM3-24 had a full section reserved for ideological warfare (following McFate, Jackson, “The object beyond war: counterinsurgency and the four tools of political competition”, Military Review, Jan-Feb 2006). It was later erased for reasons unknown to the authors.

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The use of research from human sciences is problematic for a COIN stakeholder, as the field fails to render fully conclusive evidence (as there is in electronics or aerodynamics for example). Indeed, human sciences are always crippled by the impossibility of performing reproducible experiments<sup>6</sup>, and seemingly lack clearly delineated concepts.

Therefore, when selecting a relevant human sciences concept for a COIN stakeholder, the following criteria are proposed:

- The concept should have proven fruitfulness, having defined new areas of research, discussed by social scientists.
- The concept's assumptions should be testable in the field. One should be able to verify a concept by interviewing individuals who are the object of the concept.
- The concept should deliver operational concepts for COIN's stakeholders.
- The concept should be formalized to such an extent as to enable Modelling & Simulation (M&S) efforts and intelligence data organisation<sup>7</sup>.

This article is such a contribution. It introduces an anthropological concept: the traditional to modern transition and how it can prove useful in understanding the different reactions of traditional populations facing modern influence. It is noteworthy that we are not only intervening in the context of failed states but also in "detrribalized" areas, "eroded by conflict or population displacement"<sup>8</sup>. Thus, this article proposes the need to repair tribal structures first through *tribe building*, an operational concept to help societies at the traditional stage proceed peacefully toward modernity, whilst ensuring that this happens in cohesion with state and nation building activities.

## **THE TRADITIONAL TO MODERN CONCEPT**

### **Traditional to Modern Metrics**

A society holds traditional and modern traits. Whilst some are more obvious than others, all can be helpful for understanding tensions between traditional and modern forces. Measurements can be collected by COIN's stakeholders by interviewing host nation individuals. This section presents some of those metrics.

#### **Birth Rate**

One major non-ambiguous metric of modernity is birth rate. A high birth rate (6 or above) is a generally accepted trait of pre-modern society. A moderate birth rate (around 2) does not, however, automatically indicate a modern society but does provide a reliable harbinger.

Asking an individual how many children he or she has or wants may give an insight into their adherence to modern values. Fewer children will enable the parent to invest time, attention and money into their upbringing as well as ensure good education. However, as we will see, their upbringing will not necessarily lead to an adherence to modern values.

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<sup>6</sup> The interested reader about applicability of human science can see further in "Gun, Germs and Steel" by J. Diamond, Epilogue, or "War, Peace and War", Peter Turchin, chap 12.

<sup>7</sup> For current challenges with COIN M&S, see "Future imperfect, Army struggles to model irregular warfare scenarios", Training & Simulation Journal, August/September 2009. See also "Understanding Human Dynamics", The Defense Science Board, Mars 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Kilcullen, The accidental guerrilla, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 199.

### **Illiteracy vs Literacy**

A statistical indicator of modernity is the literacy level. For example, compared to Iraq<sup>9</sup> ( 74,1 %), China (90,9 %) or India (61 %), Afghanistan is backward (28,1 %). Literacy is an enabler of modern phenomena such as formal justice, capitalism, taxes and press.

### **Worker Productivity**

A common definition of modernity is productivity per worker: productivity is higher in Germany than in Amazonian's tribes<sup>10</sup>. This metric can be measured by analysing the degree of workers's specialization. Notice that productivity is strongly related to modern factors such as literacy, technical innovation and the ability of a society to solve business disputes (judicial security).

### **Tribe Solidarity vs. Individualism**

For a visitor from a modern society, some traits of traditional societies such as tribal solidarity are difficult to grasp.

In traditional societies, inter-individual relations are based on the respect of a code of honour that defines the group<sup>11</sup>. As long as it is respected, people can behave freely. This code is enforced at the family, clan, tribe or ethnic levels and within each, members "honour" their group by following the code. In tribe intensive societies, a clan is responsible for every member and vice versa. It is difficult to ask a tribe member to behave in a certain way if his tribe will not endorse him. (The Elders' role is to decide whether certain behaviour is respectful of the code of honour). It is therefore recommended to address a tribe or a clan as a cohesive group<sup>12</sup>, as decisions are made collectively.

Conversely, seen from a traditional society, individualism can be equally foreign. Our societies are based on the juridical standard of individual responsibility wherein adults take sole responsibility for their actions.

### **Traditional and Modern Value Spaces**

Weber at the end of the 19th century argues that a traditional society sees its multiple domains of activity: religion, morality, politics, justice, economy, and sexuality as closely linked. All of these domains are encompassed by common values that shape, to a certain extent, the behaviour of individuals. For instance, in Afghanistan, the code of honour of true pashtun, "pashtunwali," incorporates all those domains; it implies "courage, revenge, hospitality, generosity to a defeated enemy, [...] heeding the voice of the jirga [...] and the protection of women's honour"<sup>13</sup>.

On the other hand, a modern society is characterised by the division of all domains of activities into separate systems, each with its own specific value, for instance:

- Public policy: around the 15th century in Europe, the policy domain slowly became independent from religion. Thus, politics has been isolated from morality or religion for many centuries<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> All literacy rates are from "The world factbook", CIA.

<sup>10</sup> "Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie", Boudon, Bourricaud, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2006, p 635.

<sup>11</sup> Tocqueville stresses how the democratic man has lost the significance of honour, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, II, III, XVIII.

<sup>12</sup> "Civil-Affairs Confronts the "Weapon of the Weak" Improvised Explosive Devices in Iraq », Dean, Bartles, Berger, *The small war journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/docs-temp/220-dean.pdf>. It is authors's perception, that in this endeavour, the CIMIC team decided to engage to group responsibility instead of individuals to avert IED posting in the group area.

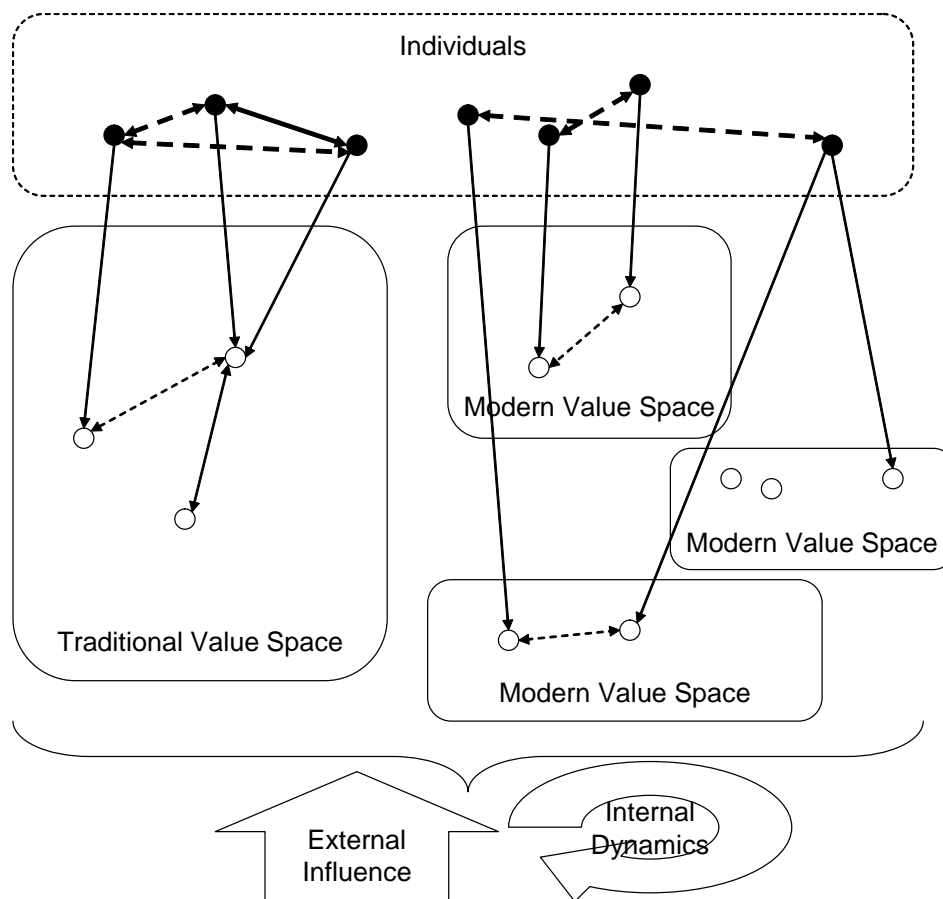
<sup>13</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 75; p. 275.

<sup>14</sup> Weber emphasizes that the rational principles taught by Machiavel to any prince to conquer, wield and maintain the power were already term by an indian thinker Kautilya long before J-C (Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, Plon, Paris, p. 177).

- Economy: this domain is not only dedicated to satisfaction of the community's needs but also to accumulation of wealth for its own sake.
- Higher education: university as an institution independent from religion or politics is a clear marker of a modern society.

It would, however, be a mistake for each COIN stakeholder on the field to grasp such social change as representative of a transition from traditional to modern society, as each society simultaneously maintains both traditional and modern organisation of values.

As described in the following figure, the concept can be modelled by stipulating that in all societies, individuals are bound by "value spaces"<sup>15</sup>. A traditional society is characterized by a large traditional value space and small modern value spaces. Conversely, a modern society is characterized by a moderate or small traditional space and numerous modern spaces of significant sizes.



**Figure 1 : Schematic view of the traditional to modern concept. The population of the society in transition towards modernity is composed of individuals. (Each plain disk at the top of the figure represents an individual). According to its activity, each individual is within a traditional or a modern space. (Position within the space is depicted by the tip of the arrow which extends from the individual). More precisely, when an individual is within a space, he is an implicit adherent to a particular value, related, for example, to his cast or rank. (Values are represented as empty disks). A system of values enables an individual to position himself at remote or proximate distance from other individuals. (Relations between individuals are represented as bi-directional arrows, bold and dotted in the case where relations are of a remote type, bold and plain bi-**

<sup>15</sup> A "value space" contains values that are coherent between themselves. Values from two different spaces are not coordinated.

directional arrows where they are of a proximate type). Each value system enables a hierarchy, a distance production mechanism that is essential for the stability of a group of individuals. An important anthropological concept emerges that, within the traditional space, all values are coordinated (for example religion and law). However, at other moments, the same individual can be situated in a modern space, one in which activities are innovative to tradition. (For example, education for girls, capitalist economy, job with a salary, etc.). Modern spaces are plural because they each carry value systems that are independent from one space to the other (for example between the modern space of economy and the modern space of democratic politics). Changes are results of internal dynamics and exterior influences.

## Rationalization Process

Having outlined the differences between traditional and modern value spaces our next step is to propose a transition model of traditional to modern dynamics.

The emergence and growth of modern spaces within a traditional society is the result of a *rationalization* process. (The term was coined by Weber). A modern value space emerges or grows because people have come to believe that it is more efficient. In terms of economics, the purpose is to accumulate wealth: a purpose autonomous from any local customs or religious beliefs.

Likewise, rationalization of political power is the creation of a value space that is independent from religion or morality: it is the search for how to conquer, wield and maintain political power. It may give rise to sovereignty of political leaders over traditional authorities (elders, religious leaders) but also to a bureaucratic administration. This last feature is closely related to modernity. As emphasized by Weber, modern life is impossible without mass administration<sup>16</sup>. The man wielding administrative power is therefore no longer the owner of a public charge following the group code of honour. He faces his commitments only by enforcing impersonal and rational rules, according to his specialized training<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, in their concern regarding state building, COIN stakeholders will have to face the problematic issue that it is generally not customary for a chief to administrate over his people<sup>18</sup>. His aim is rather to maintain personal relationships with his subjects using ability to interpret tradition or trade "political goods" for loyalty<sup>19</sup>.

A question arises in countries affected by unrest: should an administrative power coming from a central government be the main ruler? Some argue that every population has a desire to be administrated<sup>20</sup>. However, because in some tribal areas the rationalization process has not yet occurred, the potential efficiency of an administration (search for an efficient and equal treatment of citizens) is questionable.

This is not to say that tribes are devoid of organization. The major expectation in weakened tribal areas is justice. For instance, the success of the Taliban movement is ascribed to their proficiency in giving fair justice to people<sup>21</sup>. If many people living in a tribal area do not want to be ruled by a centralized administration they expect that their quarrels can be settled quickly by tribunals enforcing traditional values. After restoration of public order, fair justice administration seems to be the first expectation of the people<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Weber, *Economie et Société*, I, Plon, Paris, p. 298.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 291. *Sociologie des religions*, Gallimard, Paris, p.374-375.

<sup>18</sup> Georges Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1963, p. 390.

<sup>19</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 50-51.

<sup>20</sup> Rupert Smith, *The utility of force*, op. cit., p.269-270.

<sup>21</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerilla*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> Rupert Smith, *The utility of force*, op. cit., p. 366.

The account of this rationalization process helps to debunk a common misunderstanding: that a nation building's strategy presupposes a modern interpretation of society, related to the rationalization of politics. A traditional society doesn't perceive itself as a nation because political actions are not yet an autonomous field of values<sup>23</sup>. A national vision arises in individualist ideology when people try to convert all social relations in links of citizenship between individuals<sup>24</sup>. It is erroneous to think that all traditional societies will and are becoming nations.

### **Individualistic and Holistic Values**

Louis Dumont, a French anthropologist, tackles the notion of values from a different stance, highlighting the idea that man can interpret social life from an either holistic or individualistic perspective. A holistic ideology promotes the perception of society as a whole, within which values such as, kinship, hierarchy, solidarity, and redistribution play a vital role. On the contrary, in an individualistic ideology, society is perceived as composed of isolated individuals; characterized by liberty, self reliance, freedom of consciousness, and social climbing<sup>25</sup>.

One must nevertheless understand that neither ideology alone can be used to accurately describe the social construction of each society. In a traditional society with a powerful holistic ideology, some individualistic values will always remain. (Some traditional societies tolerate forms of religious individualism, such as the "renonceur" in India, or promote self reliance, as in pashtunwali or in Bedouin's tribes<sup>26</sup>). Likewise, in a modern society built on an individualistic ideology, some aspects of social life will still be ruled by holistic values (for instance, kinship values, social justice). It is therefore futile to explain the new social conflicts as a result of the clash between antagonistic traditional and modern values. In India, for example, holistic values at the core of the caste system coexist with the expansion of democracy and a market economy<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, those people who receive an occidental education view the caste ideology as a way to possess an honoured status, protecting them against an intensive social mobility working in others parts of society.

### **Non Violent Transitions**

There are, fortunately, non-violent transitions to modernity. One example is the Somaliland, an autonomous northern area of Somalia. The relative stability amid an otherwise troubled environment is, according to local leaders, the result of a balance between traditional and modern political forces. There are two assemblies; one where each clan is represented and the other, an assembly of elected representatives. The Elder's assembly possesses more power than the elected assembly but it allows elected representatives to run state functions. In other words, the *traditional value space* gives room to *modern value spaces* through a *rationalization* process; a dynamic endorsed by the authorities (the elders) of traditional value spaces.

India provides another interesting example of a successful and balanced transition to modernity, and one which nevertheless maintains respect for tradition. In India, the traditional value space is the caste system. Whilst workers of different castes are willing to share labour space freed from traditional hierarchy, outside of the workplace caste system is inevitably present.

According to history and the traditional to modern concept, few cultural premises in a traditional society forbid a non-violent transition to modernity.

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<sup>23</sup> Weber, *Economie et Société* II, Plon, Paris p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> L. Dumont, *Essais sur l'individualisme*, Seuil, Paris, 1983, p. 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, Gallimard, Paris, 1966 (University of Chicago Press, 1970); *Homo aequalis*, Gallimard, Paris, 1977 (From Mandeville to Marx. The genesis and triumph of economic ideology, University of Chicago Press).

<sup>26</sup> Evans-pritchard, *Sanusi of Syrenaica*, p 210.

<sup>27</sup> *Homo hierarchicus*, op. cit., p. 283.



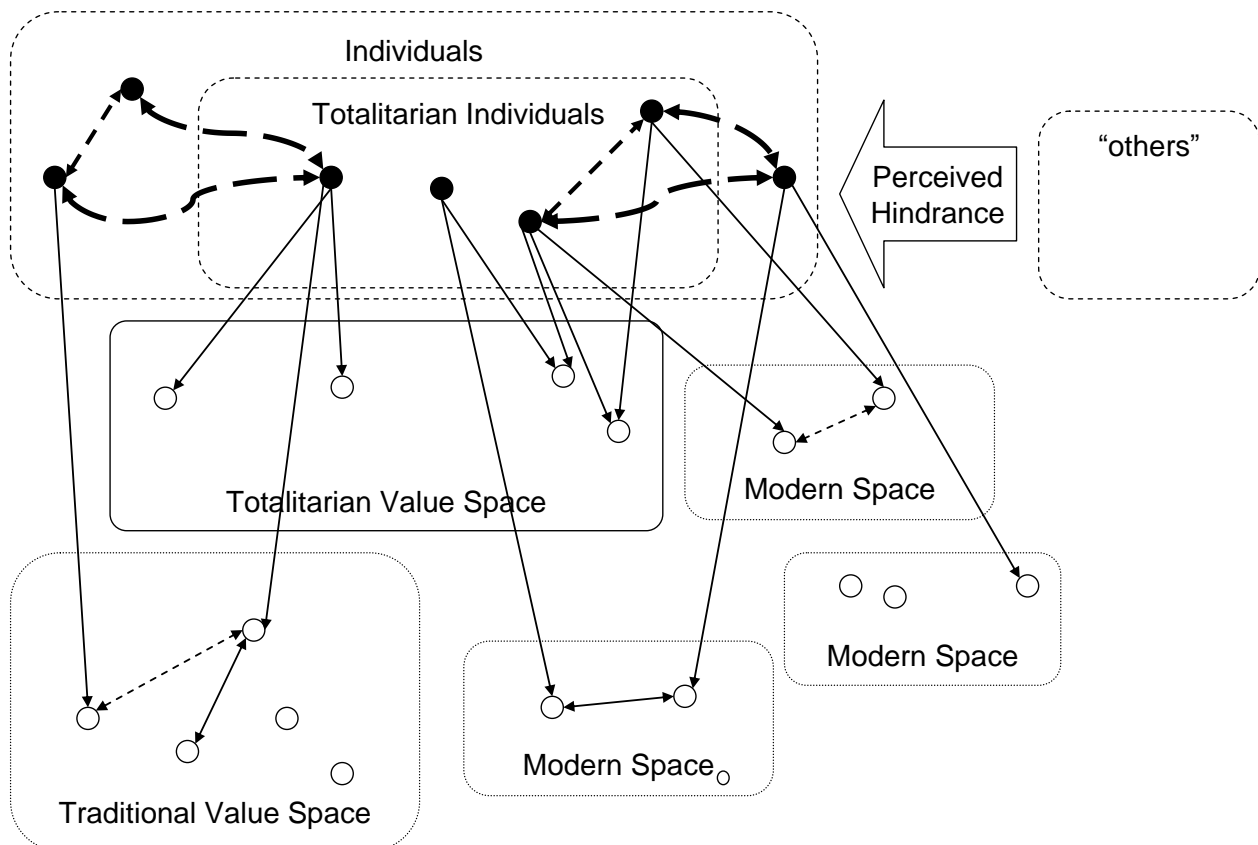
## Violent Transitions and Totalitarian Reaction

Even if each transition is unique, a pattern emerges: many transitions to modernity involve the risk of violent uprisings. This risk can be explained by:

- Humiliation as the result of an overly fast transformation of the traditional space: individuals attached to traditional values are prone to violent reaction because they have lost their status. They expect to restore traditional society in order to recover their dignity.
- Frustration as the result of an overly slow transformation of the traditional space: individuals, especially youths, welcome modernity and are frustrated by the pace of growth of modern spaces. They are prone to provoking conflicts in order to accelerate the transition to modernity.

Both problems do coexist. They may be exacerbated by generational conflicts that occur in a tribal society (where elders hold most of the privileges), as the youth can be prone to fight either for higher traditional status or a modern way of life (As stated by Gluckman, those conflicts feed on the lack of opportunities related to low workers's specialization). But are such factors enough of a catalyst to unleash violence? It will later be seen that an ideological catalyst is needed for violence to erupt.

In order to recover the confidence in their society, a political movement will often propose, as indicated in the following figure, a complete restoration of social order with totalitarian values. Totalitarian values are different from modern or traditional values in that they cover all domains of activity, mirroring some traditional values through promotion of the idea that a cohesive society is being rebuilt ("everybody is included"). On the other hand, totalitarianism promotes equality among individuals, a message at odds with the implicit hierarchy of traditional values and societies.



**Figure 2 : Schematic view of the traditional to modern concept with a totalitarian value space. A totalitarian value space can emerge within a weakened society. In typical totalitarian**

circumstances, the recently weakness of society is associated with a perceived hindrance from alien individuals: the "others". In order to restore weakened bonds between individuals, the totalitarian movement invents new bonds between individuals based on abstract values (in comparison with traditional social life). These values are said to be totalitarian because they are intended to govern all individuals requiring whole-heart allegiance. As indicated in the figure, those new inter-individuals bonds create conflicts (depicted by curved bi directional bonds) with individuals who are not adhere to totalitarian values.

Totalitarianism as a reaction to modernity embodies some contemporary features: it is literate and delivers an equalitarian message, stressing the new dignity offered to all. But its values are essentially opposed to those of both traditional and modern systems<sup>28</sup>. In other words, reaction to modernity is seldom about going back to traditional society, but about proposing a new order based on totalitarian values, destroying both individual liberty and traditional hierarchy.

People in a state of anomy<sup>29</sup> can be drawn towards another sub type of totalitarianism: religious totalitarianism, an attempt to reunify a weakened society through abstract religious values, separate from social traditions. It will later be explained how these religious values, innocuous by themselves, have been transformed into totalitarian values capable of taking over the lives of individuals.

### Stability and Secession in Tribal Societies

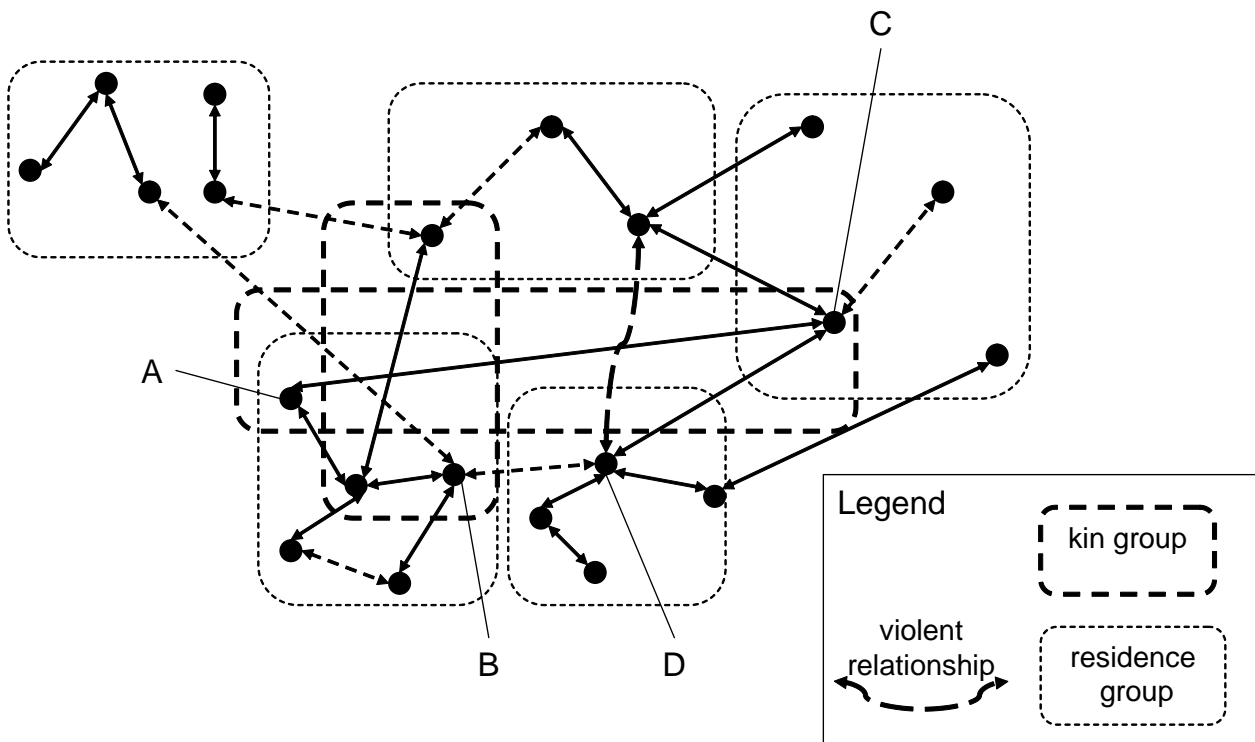
Our modern way of thinking may compel us to disregard the stability of a tribal society devoid of centralized institutions. Yet, as Max Gluckman argued, the cohesion of a traditional society depends on competing forms of allegiance that bind individuals<sup>30</sup>. As depicted in the following figure, it is because each individual is simultaneously obliged to belong to different kin groups and adhere to the interests of the resident group that feuds seldom break out.

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<sup>28</sup> Dumont, *Homo aquaelis*, op. cit., p. 21-22 et 98.

<sup>29</sup> Anomy is a concept coined by Durkheim, a contemporary of Weber. It is a social disorder within which society does not propose reliable values to individuals helping them to give significance to their life.

<sup>30</sup> Max Gluckman, *Custom and conflict in Africa*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1955, p. 4.



**Figure 3: Gluckman schema of traditional inter-group feuds. Two individuals can be allied or opposed. Between groups, conflicts can erupt because there is an inter-individual feud (depicted as a curved double arrow). However, because groups possess many types of relationship, those inter-individual feuds rarely turn into inter-group violence. In the presented case, individuals A and B are in the same residence group and C and D are in others residence groups. B and D are in a troubled relationship but since A and C are in the same kin-group (they are brothers in law for instance), a conflict between A+B and C+D is unlikely to arise.**

Kilcullen emphasizes that in Afghanistan, most pasthun are reluctant to engage themselves in blood-feuds<sup>31</sup>. Thus, it becomes clear that the Taliban's aim is to create one main fake identity from existing opposite allegiances in order to exacerbate social quarrels, while, in a tribal society, it is impossible to expect a wholehearted allegiance from individuals<sup>32</sup>.

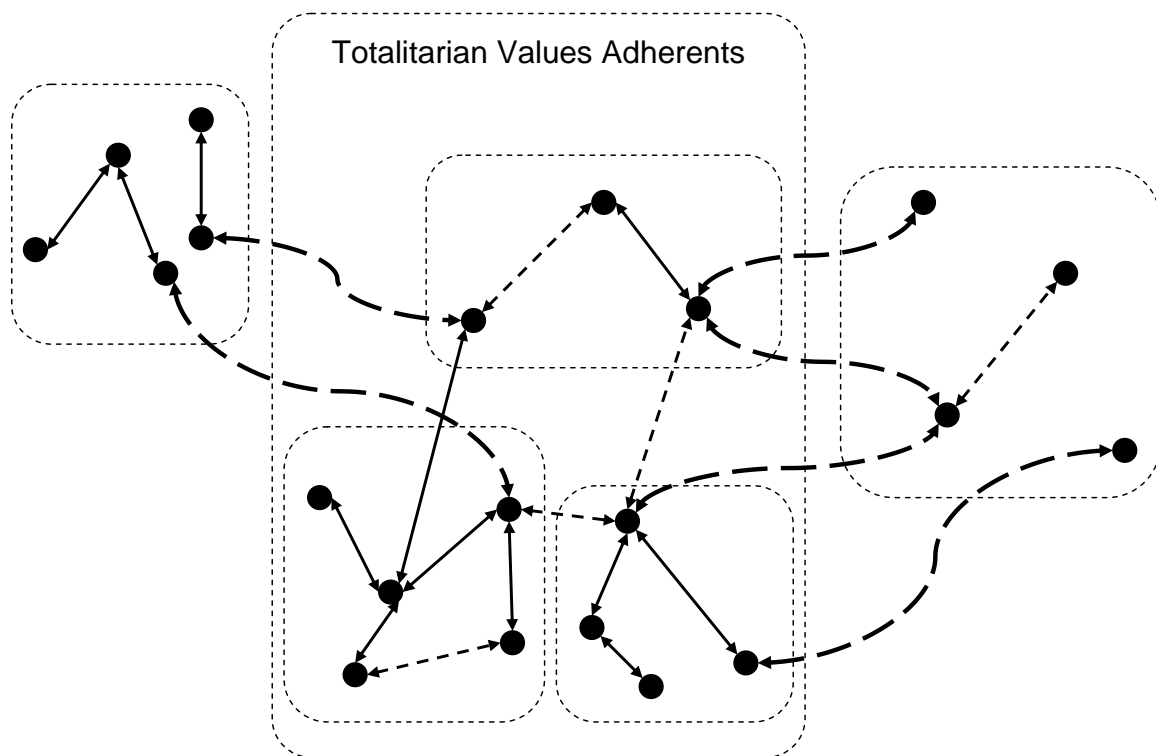
Replacing several forms of traditional allegiances with a single and exclusive identity is a well known modern tactic to arouse conflicts. In Iraq, AQ intended to trigger a civil war between Sunni and Shi'a by reducing the fabric of society to this abstract opposition. For it is not rare to see Iraqi tribes with both Sunni and Shi'a branches<sup>33</sup>; in a traditional society, identities are characterised by their non-fixity and complexity<sup>34</sup>. Two individuals can be, for example, opposed as a result of antagonistic religious affiliations but be simultaneously allied if they belong to the same tribe.

<sup>31</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 76. It was a "self regulating social system for governance without government" (p. 77). In this regard, Kilcullen takes on Evans-Pritchard's concept of "ordered anarchy" for describing Sudanese Nuer tribes.

<sup>32</sup> Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Rituals in Tribal Societies*, p 111

<sup>33</sup> Kilcullen, *ibid* p. 172

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155.



**Figure 4: Inter-group violence after a totalitarian group takes hold. In this case, former inter-group relationships ruled by opposite allegiances are replaced with systematic conflicting relationships.**

There is common concern that this type of "tribe building" acts more as a catalyst for the renewal of old clannish quarrels than as a solution to the problem.

In a traditional society each individual comprehends and embraces the values of the group and this is why these societies, as Durkheim argued, are vulnerable to secessions. A band of young men unified by brotherhood of arms can split from the clan and establish a new authority elsewhere based on the same holistic values<sup>35</sup>. This secession process, made possible by holistic ideology is an internal dynamic of tribal society that can give rise to a warlord's domination. Tribes may then fall under the domination of warlords instead of reliable elders<sup>36</sup>. However, only altered traditional structures that leave individuals in a state of anomy-where they are no longer ruled by the authority of opposite allegiances-lead to endless conflicts<sup>37</sup>.

It is a common assessment that the Taliban movement is not unified (Shura of Quetta, Haqqani network, warlord Hekmatyar's Islamic party, Mashud heirs...)<sup>38</sup>. But tribal secessions and fundamentalist movement divisions are not led by the same dynamic. In religious contexts, the secession's principle is not holistic, based on common values, but individualist. It is actuated by the ability of the mollah propounding, in order to build a separate identity, a new vision of classical beliefs<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris p. 123-124. Kilcullen underscores the tendency of the pasthun tribes "to fragment into feuding sub-groups when... an external threat is withdrawn" (*The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 76).

<sup>36</sup> Kilcullen, *ibid*, p. 165; p. 178-179

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 251.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48, p. 83, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

The Taliban movement, as a totalitarian reaction coming from the pashtun tribes, is still ruled by two principles: tribal secession and fundamentalist division. This complexity undermines the ability to predict usual behavior.

## **TRIBE BUILDING**

Tribe building is a set of practices with a desired "end state": the smooth growth of modern value spaces endorsed by traditional authorities, and a rejection of totalitarian forces. This chapter outlines some of those practices, which should be performed with great care due to the difficulty of knowing a priori which modern space should be developed first, who the traditional authorities are or what the level of endorsement is.

### **Intelligence Preparation for the Battlefield**

During interviews with individuals, adherence to traditional, modern or totalitarian values should be assessed. Note that it will occur that people express mixed feelings toward traditional or modern values. For instance, a totalitarian movement can use modern values, as formal democracy, to alter the fabric of traditional society.

### **Road Building**

One of the highly advocated "hearts and minds" activities is to build roads in order to win the support of the population. But winning that support requires more than improving the population's standard of living<sup>40</sup>. Counterinsurgents shouldn't take for granted that members of a given society are only interested in economic well being<sup>41</sup>, freedom of motion, and improvements of the living or working conditions, notably in landlocked areas<sup>42</sup>.

As Kilcullen points out, even if it shows COIN's long-term commitment, building a road, by itself, could have both positive and negative effects<sup>43</sup>. In a counterintuitive way, the main interest seems to be the restoration of the cohesion of traditional society, a "tribe building"<sup>44</sup> activity. Road building achieves the restoration of tribal values such as clannish solidarity by, notably, helping elders to weave new forms of patronage<sup>45</sup>.

### **Traditional Patronage and Graft**

Part of the popularity of the Taliban, and other extremist religious movements, relies on the rejection of bribery in traditional societies. But in their attempt to counter the Taliban's claims, COIN stakeholders must make a clear distinction between graft and patronage, a system where economy is encompassed by traditional values. At a local level, if a tribal elder uses his social position to concentrate wealth, it is to beget loyalties through distribution of goods. In that sense, graft, at the tribal level, is not pernicious and can be a good practice<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Rupert Smith, *The utility of force*, op. cit., p. 266.

<sup>41</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 71; p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> The process of constructing a road becomes a way "of restoring and reintegrating the tribe's honor and cohesion, regaining their status, and redressing the erosion of social structure caused by war and extremism" (ibid, p. 82).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid; p. 182; Jim Gant, *One Tribe at a Time*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Sometimes it would be needed to strengthen the patronage's power of the tribal elder (Ibid, p. 166; p. 181).

Inversely, if a non-tribal leader, representing the modern state at any level takes graft, (the money from poppy smuggling, for instance<sup>47</sup>), it is pure and simple theft because it will not be redistributed.

In this respect, Kilcullen quotes a critical example. In Afghanistan, president Karzaï unfortunately used such political goods trading in order to weaken the strong tribes ruling the south of the country. Men from outside the tribal organisation were promoted as provincial governors to maintain the president's tribe supremacy. As a result of this dubious strategy-using clientelism to erode the tribal structure-Kilcullen noticed that in the south, such social disorganisation<sup>48</sup> strengthened the Taliban uprising.

### **Strengthening Tribal Forces**

A straightforward practice for COIN's stakeholders to carry out is the strengthening of tribal forces in order to recover the first stage of social order. It should be done without losing sight of their feasible reintegration into more centralized institutions<sup>49</sup> as tribe building endeavours will, in the end, encounter a classical problem: transforming irregular forces into a regular army<sup>50</sup>. During the stabilization phase, a national army may face ethnic or clannish divisions (currently occurring in the training of the Afghanistan Army). Likewise, in Iraq in 2006-2007, the central state was a sectarian force in the Shi'a Sunni civil war<sup>51</sup>. At that time, it was considered unwise to stabilize the country by increasing the central state's power. Instead, tribal authorities were given autonomous force to support stabilization of troubled provinces, for it is the stabilization of tribes that enables state legitimization and not the opposite. With empirical evidence, some practitioners, such as Jim Gant in Afghanistan, have reached similar conclusion<sup>52</sup>.

### **Disaggregation's Strategy**

In his brilliant study on the driving forces behind "hybrid war" Kilcullen points out a powerful solution: the disaggregation strategy<sup>53</sup>. COIN's stakeholders must be able to distinguish between people who fight to protect their traditional way of life and groups who endeavour to build a new society based on abstract religious values<sup>54</sup> which may be contrary to tribal customs<sup>55</sup>. This strategy has been corroborated by the successful split that in Iraq separates Sunni tribes from the foreign fighters of AQ, or some Shi'a tribes from Shi'a extremists<sup>56</sup>.

The method can in theory be applied in Afghanistan, but it seems to rely on incomplete premises: the group trying to build a new form of fraternity is under the control of foreign fighters who come from outside the tribal structure, looking for a way to permeate it<sup>57</sup>. But the reasons why Pashtun people become part of the Taliban are rarely examined.<sup>58</sup> The main concern is whether insurgents are local or are concealed foreign fighters with their own goals<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 165-166.

<sup>50</sup> Rupert Smith, *The utility of force*, op. cit., p. 7-8. Guerrilla forces must not become political forces in time of peace. A victorious force had always represented a threat for her own country (p. 170).

<sup>51</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 126-127.

<sup>52</sup> Jim Gant, "One Tribe at a Time", op. cit, p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 285.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 159-160; p. 172. Cf Jim Gant, "One Tribe at a time", op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 173.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 113-114. Permeation works through "intermarriage with local tribes, co-opting of local leaders, purchase and operations of businesses..., charity activities, sponsorship or partnership with madrassas, and settling of local disputes" (p. 235).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 113-114.

<sup>59</sup> Rupert Smith, *The utility of force*, op. cit., p. 271.

A French anthropologist, Georges Balandier, inspired by the work of Max Gluckman, makes a relevant assumption that brings about an interesting theory. A normally functioning holistic society does not have any totalitarian tendencies. But a tribal society, after having being weakened by external actions, strives to rebuild itself on a wider basis<sup>60</sup>. This means, for instance, that the Taliban movement's attempt to establish a great "pashtunistan"<sup>61</sup> is the result of an internal dynamic of the eroded tribal structure and not only an external exploitation of its failures<sup>62</sup>.

As Georges Balandier argues, in West Africa in the 50's, numerous messianic movements<sup>63</sup> occurred in reaction to the disruption of tribal values by the colonialist authority. Traditional hierarchies offer status to individuals so when these are eroded, religion may propose a new dignity carried by messianic identity. This desire for new dignity by disenfranchised individuals can explain totalitarian abuse of religious values and provides an explanation as to why religious leadership grows in reaction to an external invasion<sup>64</sup>.

Thus, the Taliban uprising may be grasped, for one part, as an *internal* reaction of pashtun society altered by thirty years of war and external interference. Even if this uprising stemmed partially from the outside presence, its internal dynamic cannot be explained by support of foreign countries alone. Moreover, religious beliefs are not the main drivers of this hybrid war. Despite the supposed creed of suicide bombing as a highway to heaven, religion itself is an inadequate explanation for violent behaviour<sup>65</sup>.

## Ideological Warfare

Ideological warfare is discussed in the context of Afghanistan. It is safe to say that the Shura of Quetta Taliban have traits of a totalitarian movement. They propose a totalitarian value space that enforces its principles in every domain of life and suppresses individual liberty.

From this, we can distinguish Taliban strengths and weaknesses:

The Taliban's ideology offers an *opportunity for youths*. More literate than their elders and attracted by the meritocracy of modernity or the righteousness of democracy<sup>66</sup>, youths somehow wish to challenge traditional society. That the subsequent reaction against western modernity is fuelled by literate, ambitious and religious youths is an apparent paradox<sup>67</sup>. For, apart from warfare, a religious context offers the best opportunities for social climbing in a traditional society. (A counter argument may be made that opening spaces of modernity offers equally great opportunity for social climbing, offering education support and job opportunities.)

From an ideological warfare point of view, some weaknesses should be highlighted:

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<sup>60</sup> Georges Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire*, op. cit., p. 276-277.

<sup>61</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 52. It is critical to understand that Taliban's main objective is not to overthrow Afghan or Pakistan governments but to restore the caliphate in Pashtunistan which was cut in half by the Durand line (Kilcullen, p. 50; p. 52, p. 234).

<sup>62</sup> "While Al Qaeda was a foreign body, The Taliban, cruel and despotic as they may be, were part of the culture" (Peter Baker, *The New York Times*, 17/10/2009).

<sup>63</sup> According to Weber, individuals with a messianic identity are deprived people who receive a religious mission that gives them a new dignity related to actions they have to perform (*Sociologie des religions*, Gallimard, Paris, p. 344-345).

<sup>64</sup> Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 249.

<sup>66</sup> Kilcullen quotes the example of a member of a Taliban party in the FATA who wanted formal democracy to destroy the tribal authority of the malik (*ibid*, p. 231-232).

<sup>67</sup> The Pakistani novel "The reluctant fundamentalist" by Hoshin Hamid, Penguin Book, 2007, accounts how an exceptionally gifted Pakistani youth can turn into a frightening fundamentalist.



- Contrary to their claim, the Taliban's aim is not the restoration of genuine tribal values. At the core, their message is ideological, based on a messianic identity that delivers an equalitarian message.
- The Taliban unleash inter-tribal violence: tribe men have multiple allegiances<sup>68</sup> to residence groups, wife clans, revenge clans, etc... (see above). These mixed allegiances enable a relatively peaceful cohabitation between clans. By enforcing an exclusive allegiance to the Islamic brotherhood among tribes, the Taliban destroy these networks of loyalties and trigger brutal inter-tribal conflicts.
- In the end, the Taliban do not propose a viable transition toward modernity. History is cruel in this regard-all attempts to maintain a messianic resistance to modernity have resulted in endless violence.

## CONCLUSION

This article proposed two concepts: the traditional to modern analytical concept and the operational tribe building concept. It proposes that in COIN operations, tribe building should be balanced with nation and state building activities. From a broader perspective, it advocates a more systematic formalization of human sciences into concepts to enable its use by COIN stakeholders<sup>69</sup>.

Tribe building's ultimate goal is the restoration of tribal structure, a first step toward stabilization. It enables the bringing together of conditions that eventually give rise to a democratic evolution<sup>70</sup>. In some contexts, if not preceded by tribe building, offering people the right to vote is an upside down strategy<sup>71</sup>. The first stages toward public order should entail the repair of social structures, which poses the interesting paradox that restoring the traditional fabric of society is the best way to achieve peaceful transitions toward democracy. As stated by Stuart Mill, recognizing the people's right to self determination is accepting that western democracy won't necessarily be the result of it and therefore, that imposing democracy from outside carries the risk of depriving societies of virtues won in a struggle for freedom<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Gluckman, Custom and conflict in Africa, op. cit., p19, «Hence, the whole system depends for it's cohesion on the existence of conflicts in smaller sub-systems».

<sup>69</sup> In addition to tribe building, other valuable concepts derived from human sciences meet aforementioned criteria. For example, the Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto made a very valuable contribution to the fight against the Sendero Luminoso in the 1990's<sup>69</sup> by proposing, among other things, a leaner management of peasant's land rights.

<sup>70</sup> Kilcullen, The accidental guerrilla, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 182.

<sup>72</sup> A few words on non-intervention (1859), in Essays on politics and society, 1977.